

## OUR GERMAN LETTER.

LEIPZIG, February 24th, 1888.

In opera, "Die Drei Pintos," spoken of in my last letter, has had a run of four weeks—two, three and four performances each week: so popular is it that, this week it has been performed for the King of Saxony, who is paying his annual visit to Leipzig. The plot of this opera is really funny. Pinto the first's father, had, in a hunting excursion, saved the life of a nobleman (Don Pantaleone), who in gratitude, promised him the hand in marriage of his daughter (Clarissa) and gave him a letter to the purport, which, when he should come and present to Pantaleone would make it a certainty he could claim the fulfilment of the promise. Pinto, having the letter, starts for the castle of Pantaleone. On the way he meets a mischievous young student (Don Gaston Piratos) and his servant (Ambrosia). (Gaston is himself in love with Clarissa), who treat him to a good deal of wine. Pinto becomes very confidential and tells Gaston where he is going, what for, and shows him the letter. Pinto is a great awkward fellow, brought up in the country, and unaccustomed to women's society: he asks Gaston to instruct him in his courtship. Gaston places Ambrosia in a chair and goes through the most ridiculous form of love-making imaginable, all of which he makes Pinto rehearse, (this part is intensely funny). A sudden thought strikes Gaston; he will make Pinto drunk, steal the letter and claim Clarissa himself, all of which, aided by Ambrosia, he carries out in the most absurd manner; he gets the letter and so becomes Pinto second. Pinto's coming to the castle had been heralded and great preparations were making for his reception. Clarissa is in great trouble over this, as she loves and is beloved by Don Gomez Frieroes, a young nobleman. So she sends her maid Inez to tell Pinto, and is followed by Gomez himself, who in one of the most beautiful songs I ever heard, pleads for himself and Clarissa with Gaston, otherwise Pinto the second, who sympathizes with him, and as he is a generous, whole-souled fellow, gives him the letter and bids him Godspeed. Thus Don Gomez becomes Pinto the third: he is received with great *clat* by Pantaleone and his daughter, their attendants, etc., and the marriage proceeds, when Pinto the first turns up, and here follows a very ridiculous and exciting part: as he has no letter to show, and his appearance is hugely grotesque, made game of by all the attendants of Clarissa, he is finally frightened by Gaston flourishing his sword, not before, however, he makes an exhibition of his lesson learned from Gaston in love-making. Finally the master of ceremonies with all the maids and men, huddle him off the stage, and the curtain falls as Don Gomez and Clarissa are being wedded. This is a bare outline of the plot; all the absurd situations, the beautiful scenery and the lovely, bright music make it one of the best of comic operas.

Stepping from the *ridiculous to the sublime* we had on February 1st, *Fidelio* (Beethoven), on the 6th, *The Flying Dutchman* (Wagner), on the 18th, *Tristan and Isolde* (Wagner). But as I have before said, once hearing such works as these is not enough to attempt any description of their sublime beauty. We have had also the *Meister Singers*, (Wagner), which is so complete with witty satire and the music so entrancing that when a few nights after, Reinecke's opera "Auf hohen Befehl" (On high Orders) was performed, for the first time in Leipzig, it seemed *tame*. Nevertheless, the music is extremely interesting and the plot very amusing: it was beautifully put on the stage, and at the conclusion Reinecke was called and given the usual laurel wreath. It was noticeable, however, that the greater part of the enthusiasm was from the Conservatory students. "A prophet is never without honor save in his own country," seems very applicable to the dear old Herr Doctor, Professor, Capellmeister Reinecke, to speak of him in the extravagant form of the Germans.

This month we have had only one concert worth mentioning, always excepting the Gawandhaus, which I hope to notice *en masse* at the conclusion of the season. At the Saal Bluthner (a lovely hall of the piano dealers Bluthner), Mlle. Keeburg, of Paris, gave a piano recital, and all I can myself say is, if this is a sample of the French School let us have more of it. Apart from my own opinion I will give that of our best Leipzig critic: "A clean, nearly perfect, technique; in the piano parts a clean, soft tone, in the strong forte parts sufficient power to thunder and lighten:

a sweet and true understanding of the composer, making a wonderful unity of artistic qualities." For the program we had "Praeludium and Fuge," Bach; Gigue, Handel; Variations, C minor, Beethoven; Filieuse, Raff; Capriccio, Brahms; Etude, F Major, Chopin; Grillen, Schumann; Nocturne, Field; Capriccio, Mendelssohn; Sonata, Op. 58, Chopin.

To the lover of sacred music, the most delightful hour may be spent each Saturday from two till three o'clock, at the Nicholai Kirche. The boy choir, numbering about fifty, sings with so much particularity of time that one almost forgets they are not listening to some extraordinary musical instrument. The choir at the Sunday services is generally supported by both string and brass instruments, but on Saturdays by the organ only. On the 21st of January they sang the 84th Psalm to Brahm's music. Let my readers imagine being in Luther's old church, dim and still, holy from its very associations, eyes resting on a painting of the Ascension, more than three hundred years old, listening to the song written for the "Sons of Korah," "My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord," etc., and sung by the never discontinued Thomas choir since it was directed by Mendelssohn, and realize how near the devotional soul indeed seems to the "Courts of the Lord." On the 28th we had "Jesu, Meine Freude" (Bach), all through so beautiful—no need of sermon, no need of prayers, it contained ALL. Last Sunday at the Pauline Kirche, another old, old church, a concert of classical music was given, the only exception being an organ sonata by the young American composer, Dayas. A good deal of curiosity brought to the Nicolai Kirche some weeks ago when this sonata was to be performed on the organ for the first time, a large number of musical people who were so critical that the next day Dayas and Dayas' composition were largely the subject of discussion, pro and con, as to the merits of the work: the newspaper critics dealt hardly with it, but Mr. Dayas very wisely followed the old precept "Try, try again," consequently, after the rendering of his work last Sunday, the columns of the very same paper that condemned before, now praised it in a most unqualified manner. Newspaper criticism seems to be quite as hard to understand in Germany as in America. The poor critics, I believe, are so handicapped by the "Press," that they *dare* not speak the truth, a state of things very unfortunate for the aspiring artist. Monday evening we had at the Hotel d'Prusse, Herr Von Sanko giving an exhibition of his newly invented Clavatur, otherwise, improved piano. The young Fraulein, who played a Beethoven sonata, Chopin polonaise and other selections, is supposed to be a rising artist; her illustration of this improved piano was such as to almost convince one of its superiority. The keyboard is arranged on a rising bank about five inches high and the intervals count across this bank diagonally so that a child can stretch an octave without the least difficulty, a man, with an ordinary sized hand, a fifteenth. I will endeavour in my next letter to send you a plate of the keyboard with explanations. Of course the fossilized German says "Humbug Sanko" but the progressive German says "Bravo Sanko." To day we had a Prüfung in the saal of the new Conservatory of Music. These Prüfungs are afternoon concerts given for the closing performance of the graduates of the musical course. Miss Higgins of Toronto was amongst the number, playing Mozart's piano concerto C major so well that the Conductor, Herr Zitt, said after the concert that it had been the best Mozart playing of any amongst the graduates of this year. The playing of the student orchestra was very good indeed as were also the violin and cello solo playing. The singing was very bad and a young man mangled the Brahm's piano concerto so that it was really painful to listen to it. There must have been at least five hundred students present, nearly all of whom are Conservatory pupils. The Saal of the New Conservatory building is a really beautiful one, accommodating I should say about a thousand people. All the appointments are expensively elegant. In fact the whole building is a great credit to artistic Leipzig, more so as it has, I hear, been built entirely by voluntary subscription. G. L.

Don't feel satisfied with your musical attainments merely. Look also to your character.

Don't encore—don't.

Don't be afraid of the musical press.